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## *Al Anbar Province: Building For Its Future*

By Norris Jones  
Gulf Region Central

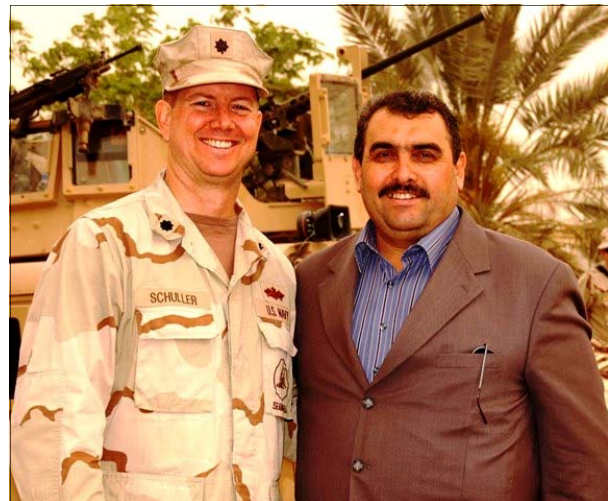
**RAMADI, Iraq** – “Our residents are fighting the terrorists,” says Al Anbar Governor Ma’amoun Smai Rashid Al-Alwani. “After years of turmoil, our people have started to understand these terrorists are working against them, not with them. Our townspeople are now volunteering to join the Iraqi police in numbers you can’t imagine.”

Al-Alwani pointed out that the citizens of Ramadi have begun to step forward identifying the location of weapon caches, explosives and IEDs to get rid of them in their neighborhoods.

Al-Alwani is an engineer and says those in Ramadi and other areas want to rebuild their communities as fast as possible. “They’re coming forward with projects they want and have a lot of great ideas. We started with the cleanup of debris and rubbish in Ramadi and we’re now working on projects to improve the supply of fresh potable water and eliminate the sewage in the streets.”

Al-Alwani explained that his province is rich in minerals and resources. He’s promoting private investment of industrial projects and hopes they can get the cement and glass factory in Ramadi reopened. “That will bring a lot of employment,” he added.

Helping Al-Alwani in his quest to plan and implement improvements throughout Al Anbar is Navy Commander Geoffrey Schuller, the Provincial Reconstruction Team’s Engineer. “On a day to day basis, I



Navy Commander Geoffrey Schuller and Al Anbar Governor Ma’amoun.  
(U.S. Army photo by Norris Jones)

deal with the Governor, his Provincial Council, and the Director Generals from all the ministries,” said Schuller.

“My mission is to help those officials develop a capability to move projects through the process to get them to the people as quickly as possible.” He noted Al Anbar is like any State back home and is the largest Province in Iraq covering 53,000 square miles. “There’s a wide variety of locales with most of its major cities, including Ramadi and Fallujah, located along the Euphrates River.”

He noted that under Sadaam, Iraq was a centralized government with Baghdad telling the outlying provinces what to do. “Now it’s decentralized and Al Anbar has

the opportunity to come up with their own plan, identify priorities, and establish their own budget. They're anxious to do that and provide improvements for their people."

He said he's helping them address a wide array of essential service improvements from electrical, to sewage treatment, roads and bridges. "We're working on getting dozens of small water units on line to help villages throughout the Province get purified water for the first time ever."

Schuller praised the Governor for his ability to go out and make things happen. "He has a genuine desire to make Al Anbar a better place and he's doing that one neighborhood, one project at a time. This is a courageous individual. He's lived through over 20 assassination attempts and has not been dissuaded from going out to cities and villages throughout Al Anbar to meet community leaders and hear their views."

Schuller is concluding a six-month tour in Iraq this month and during that time says the situation has gotten better. He notes residents are now returning to their homes in Ramadi, they're cleaning up their neighborhoods, picking up the trash, knocking down abandoned buildings that are falling apart and starting new construction. "You're not going to do that if you don't have confidence in your government. So that's a telling sign that residents there are anticipating a great future."

Schuller says, "I feel blessed I've had the opportunity to contribute to what's happening here, watching Iraqis as they fulfill their dreams." He's a Naval Reservist and in his civilian career works for Turner Construction as a Senior Project Manager in Los Angeles.

Governor Al-Alwani said Schuller had become a dear friend. "What we have been able to accomplish here is due to people like him."

**Editor's note:** Norris Jones is the Public Affairs Officer of the Gulf Region Central district, Gulf Region Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Iraq. For more information, contact Norris Jones at (540) 665-2644 or email requests to [CEGRD.PAO@tac01.usace.army.mil](mailto:CEGRD.PAO@tac01.usace.army.mil). For more information on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq, visit [www.grd.usace.army.mil](http://www.grd.usace.army.mil).